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M - 237,967

S - 566,377

# Saigon's top newsmen guessed story years ago

By Keyes Beech  
Chicago Daily News

SAIGON — The New York Times report of a Pentagon history on how the United States got involved in the Vietnam war — judged by scanty reports received here — held few surprises for the correspondents who have covered this war from the start.

In general, the Pentagon account confirms what some of us knew, half-knew or suspected without being able to document. Some of us had and wrote the story piecemeal but not in context. While we could see what was happening here, we could not know what was happening in Washington.

Obviously, President Johnson's decision to escalate the war, including the bombing of North Vietnam, was no spur-of-the-moment decision but required months of carefully calculated planning.

None of us knew that the Johnson Administration reached a "general consensus" on Sept. 7, 1964, that it might be necessary to bomb North Vietnam.

But we had a clue to the bombing on Feb. 6, 1965, the day before it began, when half a dozen of us were invited to a lunch at the home of Barry Zorathian, then the US mission spokesman for McGeorge Bundy, then White House adviser for national security.

It was an off-the-record affair. Bundy was paying us the compliment of asking us what might be done to win the war.

"We might bomb North Vietnam," I suggested.

"Precisely what good would that do?" said Bundy in his most pedantic manner.

"Why don't you ask your brother?" I said, referring to William P. Bundy, then assistant secretary of state for the Far East and an enthusiastic hawk. "He's the one who keeps promoting the idea."

New York Times correspondent Seymour Topping expressed the opinion that if we did bomb the North, Russia might be forced to come into the war.

Bundy disagreed. "Oh, they'll rattle their rockets, all right," Bundy said. "But they don't really do anything."

"Well, it's academic anyway, since we aren't going to bomb North Vietnam," another correspondent said.

U. Alexis Johnson, then deputy ambassador to Saigon and now — the State Department's senior career officer, had remained silent during most of the conversation. But now he spoke up.

"I wouldn't rule out bombing," he said with some emphasis. Topping and I later agreed it wouldn't be a bad idea to write a story speculating that we might bomb North Vietnam after all.

The following morning at 2 a.m., Viet Cong sappers hit a US helicopter unit at Pleiku and before the day was over the bombing was on.

The following month, US Marines landed at Da Nang, the first American troops landed in South Vietnam. As spring

and summer came and it was plain that the South Vietnamese were losing the war, the number of American troops grew until eventually it reached more than half a million.

Two years later, in Honolulu, I asked Alex Johnson if he ever expected we would commit more than 500,000 men to Vietnam.

"Good God, no," he exclaimed.

As the troop buildup grew, the Johnson Administration continued to deny that there was any change in US policy in Vietnam when quite obviously there was. This was the heart of Johnson's credibility gap.

Later in 1965, Gen. William C. Westmoreland, then US commander here, traced the decision to commit combat troops back to November, 1964. This coincides with the Pentagon account that Johnson made his fateful decision Nov. 3, 1964, Election Day.

Still later, in 1967 Westmoreland was to tell me that he was initially opposed to bombing the North. When I expressed surprise, he chuckled and said, "Not for the reasons you might think. Mind you, I didn't have any troops at the time and I was wondering what I would do if the whole North Vietnamese army came charging down south."

The disclosure that the United States was conducting clandestine operations in North Vietnam as early as 1964 was no surprise. Some of us wrote the story at the time, but so far as I knew, only South Vietnamese intelligence teams actually landed in the North.

Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky, who flew with the Americans on the first bombing mission of 1965 and allegedly dropped his bombs on the wrong target, was involved in the US-backed "black" operations in 1964. He flew a C-47 that dropped intelligence units.

These intelligence-gathering missions were singularly unsuccessful because of tight communist security. The intruders were quickly rounded up.

It is interesting, but not very surprising in the light of subsequent events, that a Canadian diplomat delivered a message from Washington to Hanoi shortly before US planes hit North Vietnam in August, 1964. The American strike was in retaliation for an alleged North Vietnamese torpedo boat attack on US destroyers in the Tonkin Gulf.

I was sitting in the Hotel Caravelle bar one evening shortly after the attack when a well-known CIA man with too many drinks under his belt came in and announced in a loud, clear voice:

"I want you to know the Gulf of Tonkin attack was rigged."

A couple of friends hustled him out of there. He has long since been dismissed by the CIA.

The Canadian diplomat, Blair Scaborn, delivered another message to Hanoi in 1965, something he was able to do because he was Canadian delegate to the three-nation International Control Commission, which still travels between Saigon and Hanoi.

A highly regarded professional, Scaborn sat on a packing case in his Saigon home shortly before he left for Canada late in 1965, and discussed his trip to Hanoi without revealing that he was carrying a

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### *Hooray for the CIA*

The Central Intelligence Agency comes out well in the documentation of the Vietnam war provided by *The New York Times*. Asked specifically in June, 1964, whether all of Southeast Asia would go Communist if Laos and South Vietnam were captured, the CIA reported:

With the possible exception of Cambodia, it is likely that no nation in the area would quickly succumb to communism as a result of the fall of Laos and South Vietnam. Furthermore, a continuation of the spread of communism would not be inexorable, and any spread which did occur would take time—time in which the total situation might change in any number of ways unfavorable to the Communist cause.

That was an intelligent estimate provided by what is assumed to be our best intelligence agency in defense affairs. It may no longer be good: the devastation caused since 1964 might have had the effect of self-fulfilling the domino theory.

With hindsight, the country can greatly regret that its top leaders followed their hunch rather than the CIA estimate. Not too long ago the United States was playing ping-pong with the Communist Chinese, against whom it did not want to play dominoes. The domino theory was long the most popular basis offered for the Vietnam involvement. It was not then a good basis and there is some encouragement in finding that the CIA recognized it as such.

CHICAGO, ILL.  
SUN-TIMES

M - 536,108  
S - 709,123

JUN 17 1971

## The secret war-II

The revelations contained in the secret Pentagon papers not only go a long way toward explaining how the United States became so deeply involved in the Southeast Asia conflict, they also shed some clear, sharp — and tragic — light on the why of that involvement.

Throughout the installments published by the New York Times before the temporary injunction, there runs a current of "great power" thinking which was clearly outmoded before it began. There was, for example, the "domino theory," subscribed to by most U.S. leaders and restated in a March, 1964, memorandum from Sec. of Defense Robert S. McNamara to President Johnson. Should the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese win, said McNamara, Southeast Asia from India to New Zealand would be weakened. This was not supported by the Central Intelligence Agency.

To a lesser extent, there was the question of "containment of China," mainly expounded by Sec. of State Dean Rusk. But neither the "domino theory" nor "containment of China" nor relations with Russia seem to have been the major considerations.

Rather, there was the thought that the United States, which had emerged from World War II as the world's strongest power, could somehow work its will on North Vietnam merely by applying military pressure or threatening it. This is implicit in the note given the Canadian Embassy in Washington on Aug. 8, 1964, to be transmitted to J. Blair Seaborn, the Canadian member of the International Control Commission for Indochina.

It instructed Seaborn to tell Hanoi leaders that "U.S. public and official patience with North Vietnamese aggression is growing very thin" and that Hanoi "knows what it must do if the peace is to be restored."

The planners in Washington were also discovering that increased American might was having little effect on the Viet Cong, as intelligence had also warned. In November, 1964, Ambassador Maxwell B. Taylor expressed surprise that "the Viet Cong units have the recuperative powers of the phoenix."

Another part of this mystique centered around a concern with loss of prestige in the eyes of the world — what Mr. Nixon, in a latter-day version, refers to as a view of America as "a pitiful, helpless giant."

Among others, John T. McNaughton, assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, made this point in a 1964 memorandum to McNamara assigning relative values to American goals in Vietnam. He saw 70 per cent of the effort directed "to avoid a humiliating defeat (to our reputation as a guarantor)," 20 per cent to keep South Vietnam out of Chinese hands and only 10 per cent "to permit the people of South Vietnam to enjoy a freer, better way of life."

The leaders in Washington, then, believed that it was only necessary for them to threaten and punish a little and America could retain its position — and its reputation — as the acknowledged leader of the "free world." What they reckoned without was the stubborn, stiff-necked pride and nationalism of the new countries of the Third World, particularly North Vietnam and its allies, the Viet Cong. Still thinking in terms of World War II military might and forgetting the lessons of Korea, these national movers and shakers in Washington were somehow unable to hold up their fingers to the winds of change, even as their own intelligence estimates were clearly indicating the direction of those winds.

## Security vs. embarrassment

Never before in modern times has a confrontation between the government and the press reached the classic proportion of the present court case in which the New York Times has been enjoined temporarily from continuing to publish an until-now secret Defense Department study of the Vietnam War. The Justice Department says continued publication will endanger the interests of the nation. The Times says the documents, covering the period before 1968, are now history and cannot conceivably damage American security interests, much less the lives of Americans or Indochinese.

In the great anti-censorship decision *Near vs. Minnesota* in 1931, Chief Justice Hughes held that suppression is the "essence of censorship" and prior restraint could be applied only in "exceptional cases." One, which may apply here, was where the success of the nation's armed forces was at stake in time of war; we do not believe, how-

ever, that it does. Another was the protection of private rights, but what is involved here are the scandalous actions of public officials. As for the possibility that circulation of "scandal" might tend to disturb the public peace, said Hughes, "the theory of the constitutional guarantee is that even a more serious public evil would be caused by authority to prevent publication."

The court case, it seems to us, comes down to a determination whether the national security would be truly endangered by printing the rest of the document. The government must do more than merely make the assertion that this is the case. The press cannot be muzzled by executive fiat.

Certainly the documents are embarrassing, at home as well as abroad. But this is a political consequence. The nation is entitled to the truth about its own affairs, which it is a responsibility of the press to give them.

have twice visited South Vietnam. On my first visit, I saw the finest, best trained, best equipped young soldiers the world has ever seen. I saw hospitals and supposedly pacified areas. In 1966, I was a member of the Speaker's Committee of Combat Veterans of World War II sent to evaluate the war effort. By that time, the so-called pacified areas I had previously visited had been retaken—ours for only as long as snow drops on the river—a moment white, then gone forever.

As a result of this tragic war, our country is torn by dissention—troubled by traitorous rabble-rousers and rioters who blatantly curse the beloved land which has nurtured and cared for them. And yet they are permitted to spout hate, incite arson, promote looting with impunity.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, ours is a troubled land. The war in Vietnam is causing great worry and anxiety. Among the people of my district and our whole country, sentiment is increasingly against the war. We all look for the day when every American soldier will be removed from this unhappy land.

Let us now, while we are yet strong, bring our men home. If we must fight, let us fight in defense of our homeland and our own hemisphere. Our sons' lives are too precious to lose on foreign soil. If they must die, let it be in defense of America. As a combat medic with an infantry division in the South Pacific, I have been intimate with the horrors of war and feel that the lives of our men should only be risked in case our country is attacked. In that event, we know they would resist assault with all their spirit, stamina, and strength.

I compliment the present administration's efforts to wind down the war. In order to emphasize the desire of our people to end the war, I support the amendment of the distinguished gentleman from New York (Mr. Robinson).

Mr. O'NEILL. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the Nedzi-Whalen amendment.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Massachusetts is recognized.

Mr. O'NEILL. Mr. Chairman, I feel obliged to speak in behalf of this amendment, just as I feel a moral obligation to oppose the continuation of this cruel and senseless war.

Mr. Chairman, some time ago I, with three other Members of Congress, HUGH CARRY, of New York, DAN ROSTENKOWSKI, of Illinois, and JAMES CORMAN, of California, circulated to the Members a statement of purpose on Vietnam. Over 120 Members of Congress have signed it and an additional number have signed a similar statement. Out of that, I believe, has come the Nedzi-Whalen amendment. It is an expression of concern and responsibility. It is our contention that the Congress has a responsibility for ending this war, since the President is not, and that the Congress should set a deadline for ending this war, no later than the end of this year.

I recall that it was about November 1965 that I first heard the term used: "The light can be seen at the end of the tunnel." That was the day Mr. McNamara said to us:

We will bomb North Vietnam. We will have them on their knees within 6 weeks, and the war will be over.

Well, people have been seeing the light at the end of the tunnel for over 6 years, and the war is not over.

I listened with interest today to the letter of Mel Laird, a man with whom I served for many years here in the Congress. His words are not a bit different from the words of Rusk and of McNamara; his predictions are the same, his expectations are the same.

I remember that back in 1965 I was a hawk, as some of you still are—perhaps a majority of the House. But I spoke to admirals, I spoke to generals, and I spoke to people in high security places. I spoke to members of the State Department and those in the highest echelons of Government.

These people were advocating the policy of the administration, the Johnson administration, and advocating the policy of the State Department. But within the confines of private and friendly conversations they told me they were opposed to the war, and that our policies were wrong and could not succeed. While they were publicly advocating and following the policy of the President, they told me in their private conversations that they were opposed to the war and knew that it could never be won this way, nor could we extricate ourselves this way. These were people from the CIA, generals and admirals, and you know, I believed them. They convinced me that I could not justify this war in moral, political, or security terms. They convinced me that I could not justify being a hawk on a war that could not be won, and should have been ended.

Mr. Chairman, I was one of the first, I believe, early in 1967, that changed my opinion on the war, and it was for those reasons. Our policies—then and now—could not win the war and would not end it.

You know, during my 20 years here, many important events have happened. I remember June 1961, when Khrushchev said to John F. Kennedy, the President of the United States:

Get your troops out of Berlin or we will invade.

Kennedy went over and made the great Berlin speech, called up our reserves, and Khrushchev backed down, knowing that otherwise it would have set off World War III.

That happened again, Mr. Chairman, with Cuba, in October 1962. We all received notice to report. You remember the messages, the phone calls, and telegrams that you got. We, from all of New England, went to Logan Airport; other Members met at the GSA Building in the battery section of New York, and other Members from other sections of the country went directly to Chicago or to Los Angeles. We met with trepidation, both Democrat and Republican. We did not know whether we were going to hear a declaration of war. We were there and we were told about the missiles and shown pictures of the missiles and told about the blockade. But, thankfully, Khrushchev backed down.

Mr. Chairman, why did he back down?

He knew America was serious and he knew it would mean World War III.

Why do I raise this point?

Well, Mr. Chairman, we are fighting a war which we have made no attempt to win. Why? The only way we could win would have been to have bombed Hanoi and the rice paddies, bombed Haiphong, and invaded North Vietnam with infantry. Why have we not done that? We have not done it because we know that China and Russia would come to the aid of North Vietnam, and that it would mean World War III. Just as Kennedy defended our place as a major power, so would Kossygin and Mao defend their positions.

So, what are we there for? We are there for the same reasons we have been there for years. Because we refuse to admit past errors and mistakes, I have seen the pacification program fail, and we have talked about the Vietnamization program. We give new names to old policies and continue a hopeless war.

Mr. Chairman, I believe we ought to be out of there lock, stock, and barrel tomorrow. We cannot justify our being in there. The President is fighting a war he does not want to win. Yet, he does not want to lose. We are not providing self-determination for the people, we are only providing destruction.

When I spoke with the knowledgeable people in our security and intelligence branches of Government about the war, they convinced me that this war was wrong. That was in 1966, yet the same policies continue.

What makes this war such a tragic mistake, is that we have viewed it as a war between two states, whereas in reality it is a civil war, and, unfortunately, we are fighting for the elite in Saigon, the rich who do not have the interests of the Vietnamese people at heart, nor do they have the support of the people we are supposedly fighting to save.

We are drafting 18-year-old boys to fight for people that do not draft their own sons until they are 21. And the legislature of South Vietnam on many, many occasions refused to change that age.

American boys must serve their Nation in uniform or go to jail, but the rich South Vietnamese boy can buy his way out of the Army.

We have spent \$150 billion on this war while the leaders of South Vietnam fill their Swiss bank accounts with American money.

Our Nation suffers for housing, schools, and hospitals, while the rich elite in South Vietnam accumulate wealth.

Our Nation has given so much to South Vietnam that has never reached the people there and will never reach the people there. We need much here—massive increases in funds for education, for health care, public housing, welfare, research, and environmental quality. But instead we waste our people and our substance in a useless war.

Our priorities have been turned on end while we fund and fund this war. And the corruption in that country makes it more and more tragic that a single American boy has given his life for this conflict. The Government of South Vietnam is corrupt to its core. It does not

TIMES-PICAYUNE

M - 196,345  
S - 308,949GORE SAYS TIMES  
SHOWS DECEPTION  
WAS USED IN WARBlames Johnson and Nixon  
for Actions—Ex-Senator  
Avers He Is VindicatedBy FRED TRAVIS  
Chattanooga Times Bureau

NASHVILLE — Former U.S. Sen. Albert Gore said publication by The New York Times of secret documents involved in escalating the Vietnam war, "illustrates the deception practiced by the Johnson administration and continued by President Nixon."

The former Senate dove, defeated for re-election last November by Bill Brock of Chattanooga, a Republican, said outcome of the election might have been different if the Times articles had been published a year ago.

He claimed they completely vindicate his position on the war and validate what "I have been telling the people of Tennessee for a long, long time."

Gore made these statements at a press conference here Wednesday as he announced his association as a partner in law firms here and in Washington.

He described this dual arrangement as quite common for former congressmen who take up the practice of law.

He will be a partner in a Washington law firm headed by former Massachusetts Gov. Endicott Peabody and he will be the senior partner in a firm here which includes George Barrett, Jack Mitchell and

Lionel Barrett. The Washington firm specializes in international finance while the one here is engaged in the general practice of law.

Gore said the division of his time between Nashville and Washington will depend on the needs of his clients but that initially he will spend about half of his time in each city. Mrs. Gore, who is also a lawyer, will be an associate counsel in both firms.

Resumption of a full law practice, the former Democrat senator said, will of necessity limit his lectures on college campuses and his political activities but he added:

"I hope to help elect a president who will not violate the confidence of the American people."

## Favors Muskie

He listed Sen. Edmund Muskie of Maine as his favorite for the presidential nomination but also spoke favorably of Sens. Harold Hughes of Iowa and Henry M. Jackson of Washington.

Earlier, in response to a question, Gore declared that the Times articles, based on secret documents of the Defense Department, confirmed his own findings during a 1966 investigation into the background of the Gulf of Tonkin resolution.

This resolution, approved by Congress at President Johnson's urging following an alleged attack on a U.S. destroyer in Vietnam, was used as the legal basis for sending large numbers of American troops into Indochina. The Times' series, publication of which has been halted temporarily by a federal court order, "illustrates two things," Gore said.

He listed these as "first, a great national misfortune in deception at the highest level of government; and secondly it represents the extreme to which pacification has been taken.

"Of course, we were trapped into the Vietnam war," he continued. "I have known that for a long, long time. This validates what I have said to the people of Tennessee for a long while.

"My investigation into the Gulf of Tonkin resolution in 1966 showed there was no substantial evidence that there was any attack upon one of our ships in the Tonkin Gulf in August 1964.

"The whole Vietnam war is the product of a deception by President Johnson, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Defense Department, the CIA — the whole executive branch of the U.S. Government. President Nixon has continued this deception.

"When you have had 55,000 men killed, hundreds of thousands disabled and hundreds of thousands of others made into dope addicts, this is a terrible price to pay for the politics of two presidents."

Gore asserted that the Times series showed that the people "had reason for loss of confidence in their government."

He accused the Nixon administration of practicing the same kind of deception in expanding the way into Laos.

STATINTL

PROVIDENCE, R.I.  
JOURNAL

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S - 209,501

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## Accurate Warning

In trying to assess the McNamara Report hastily aside from suffering a bad case of intellectual excess—one is impressed not the least by the generally high quality of the advice given by the intelligence community.

The voluminous report—just the part that has been published in newspapers—provides a fascinating, and sometimes shocking, insight into the process by which the United States became enmeshed in the jungle of an unwinnable Indochina war. But of all the branches of the government that had a share in the decisions on Vietnam, the intelligence agencies, particularly the CIA, come out looking the best.

The intelligence people warned—and accurately—that neither the South Vietnamese government nor the American forces could overcome the appeal of the Viet Cong to the South Vietnamese people. They warned—and accurately—of the ineffectiveness of aerial bombing. They suggested the inconclusiveness of introducing large numbers of American ground troops into the fighting in South Vietnam. After more bomb tonnage had been dropped on North Vietnam than had been dropped in World War II and after half a million American troops had been deployed in South Vietnam, the enemy remained undefeated and victory remained as elusive as it had been for 15 years.

To be sure, the CIA cannot claim 100 per cent commendation. In mid-1965 John A. McCone, head of the CIA, warned that the use of U.S. combat troops would be ineffective unless the aerial bomb-

ing campaign, already under way, was subject to "minimum restraint." That sounds suspiciously like the later exhortation of Gen. Curtis LeMay to bomb the North Vietnamese "back to the stone age."

But in general, the estimates of the CIA and other intelligence agencies seem to have gauged accurately the mood of the Vietnamese people, the staying power of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese, and the limitations of American military might when separated from the democratic ideals that had in the past motivated American intervention abroad.

If American power and ideals became separated, a large part of the reason was the failure of the highest officials in our government to inform the people or even Congress fully about both the conditions that existed in Vietnam and the real purposes for expanding the war. The McNamara Report is not a complete record of the entanglement process, but it is record enough to show the folly of presidential decisions that ignored the best intelligence and the arrogance of presidential war-making without the full participation of Congress.

Many Americans—probably a majority—failed to get aroused about Vietnam when the Johnson administration was making the fateful commitment of American combat troops because, like the officials at the top, they believed the tiny enemy could not stand for long against the overwhelming might of American troops and planes. The argument has frequently been used that these officials had little more information than the general public for the crucial decisions. But the McNamara Report indicates that they did have considerably more—and quite specific—information, much of it negative in its implications. Those who trusted the highest officials to know what they were doing were sadly mistaken. A full-dress congressional debate might have avoided the pitfall into which the country stumbled, particularly if the intelligence estimates had been more widely available.